

King County Office of Emergency Management Podcasts

Disasters: Are you ready?

Belt and Suspenders Approach

This week's pod cast is all about taking a "Belt and Suspenders" approach to emergency management.

Speaking of belt and suspenders, sometimes it feels like I need to add a web harness to hold all the gadgets that I need to stay connected in this modern society.

I use to carry a PDA, cell phone and pager. The Personal Data Assistant (PDA) which to a palm pilot, blackberry, or pocket PC. These are truly wonderful gizmos that keep your contacts, calendar, to do lists, and even your email. Most now also include a cell phone as part of their menu of services, and along with that comes web access and GPS navigation helps.

So why carry all three? In fact my future son-in-law use to harass me about it. So, today I've "downsized" and eliminated the cell phone and just use a Blackberry device. But, I still carry a pager for redundancy purposes.

So what does redundancy do for you? In plain English, it gives you a back-up when one system fails. For me the pager is a device that goes on my belt when I'm dressed in the morning and doesn't leave my pocket or person until I set it on the night stand at night, and this includes weekends, holidays, and vacation. You can't respond to a situation unless you know something is happening and it is a primary way for me to be notified of something that has happened.

For our Regional Communications and Emergency Coordination Center (RCECC) in Renton much of the cost of the facility went into the categories of Survivability, **Redundancy**, flexibility and security.

At the RCECC we have redundancy in many areas of the building. There are two gas boilers, two generators, and two HVAC systems serving the building. If one fails the other can pick up the load. We have duplicate Uninterruptible Power Systems (UPS) that

immediately take over to power critical information technology equipment until the generators can kick in.

The gas boilers that heat the building are also dual fueled so that if we lose natural gas we can switch to diesel that is stored on site.

And, there are additional aspects of redundancy like dual communication paths for hard line phone lines coming into the building and multiple radio and phone systems, like satellite that provide a limited, but still vital link should we lose other systems.

Even our television reception is redundant. First we have the cable system, then several satellite dishes, and lastly a couple of television antenna's that are a final back-up system should all the other systems fail.

So, the next time you see a gentleman wearing both suspenders and a belt, don't think it odd. He just believes in redundancy, should there be a catastrophic failure of one pant retaining system or the other.